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AUTHOR McNergney, Robert F.
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ABSTRACT

The purposes of this study were: to measure the perceived needs for skill training of student teachers, public school teachers, and other educational personnel involved in teaching center activities; to see if some of these needs related to the same underlying concepts; and to profile individual teaching centers according to some of these underlying concepts or factors. Results indicated that subjects felt needs for training in individualizing, stimulating communication, emphasizing affective growth and expression, supervision, and evaluation. Implications of the findings for supporting responses to individual teaching centers are discussed. (Author/JD)

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Assessing Perceived Needs for Training Preservice Teachers, Inservice Teachers and Other Educational Personnel in Cooperative Teaching Centers

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Robert F. McNergney

University of Minnesota

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The purposes of this study were: to measure the perceived needs for skill training of student teachers, public school teachers, and other educational personnel involved in teaching center activities, to see if some of these needs related to the same underlying concepts and to profile individual teaching centers according to some of these underlying concepts or factors.

Teaching centers are popular vehicles for cooperatively developing and implementing programs based on the mutual interest of participants. Schmieder and Yarger (1974) estimate that there may be as many as 4,500 sites throughout the nation which view themselves as part of the teaching center movement. While centers are popular, there is substantial diversity among them regarding their descriptive terminology, their structures and their functions. As Schmieder and Yarger note, the concept of "center" appears under a variety of rubrics, e.g., teaching center, teacher center, teacher education center, staff development center, etc. In an effort to impose some conceptual order to the idea of centers, the Syracuse Teacher Center Project (1974) identified and categorized 600 various centers according to their structures and functions. One of the structural types which emerged from this survey was a model which was titled a "free partnership teaching center." This model is based on the concept of a consortium, usually composed of a school district and a university or college. The partnership is entered freely by both parties in order to promote the goals of the respective institutions and their constituents.

It is this structural type of teaching center which is the focus of this survey.

Operating school-university teaching centers requires identifying the needs of cooperating institutions and the needs of individual center participants. Generally, the schools and universities or colleges involved in teaching centers seek to do three things: develop and test preservice programs, implement inservice education and/or produce and develop programs for children. Identifying the needs of center participants, or those persons involved simultaneously in their own education, the education of peer professionals and the education of children, is no less important than identifying institutional needs, but considerably less straightforward. In reality, the process is often haphazard and the results are not infrequently disappointing. Assessing needs in teaching centers at the preservice level is usually an informal process, done on a one-to-one basis between supervisor and student. Typically, assessing needs at the inservice level means finding out how many persons are interested in taking a course from Professor X. "Need" then, is measured by center participants' reactions to Professor X and/or their reactions to his course. It is this one-way approach (i.e., "I have this to offer, do you want to take it") as well as the partial information obtained through informal assessment which may contribute to what is less than full satisfaction with support services delivered to teaching center personnel.

The first logical step to building viable support systems for teaching centers which stretches beyond the typical informal or one-way approach is to begin by systematically soliciting the perceptions of persons directly involved. Some indication of why this is important and what might be expected when such an approach is adopted can be found in a survey on inservice education conducted by Ingersoll (1975). Briefly, he found that teachers expressed needs for skill training in the affective domain. He also found that elementary and secondary school teachers differed in their perceptions as well as teachers of greater and lesser experience. Ingersoll contended that "to fail to include the teacher in the decision making process lacks sense for a variety of reasons: (1) when teachers are involved at the choice point they are more likely to carry their interest into actual training; (2) it fails to make financial sense to offer something that has little relevance to teachers' needs; (3) to make all the decisions at an administrative level is little more than patronizing." If one accepts Ingersoll's assertions regarding inservice education, then it is a relatively small step to the same conclusions regarding preservice education -- both of which are primary functions of school-unversity cooperative teaching centers. The main objectives of the study, therefore, were to solicit perceived needs for skill training of teaching center personnel, to represent these needs as parsimoniously as possible through factor analysis and to profile each teaching center on the factor(s) deemed most important.

Sample

The sample consisted of 362 subjects from ten teaching centers in

the Twin Cities metropolitan area. The subjects were: (1) student teachers in their senior year from the University of Minnesota in either their first or second student teaching experience, (2) inservice public school teachers and (3) other educational personnel, or all persons who performed some type of instructional function with children, e.g., instructional aides, paraprofessionals, librarians, etc. The decision to include a category of "other personnel," even though it was such a diverse group in terms of functions, was based on the premise that these persons were an integral part of day-to-day teaching center activities. These other personnel are, however, generally overlooked or relegated to a position of obscurity when compared with the needs of students of teaching and classroom teachers, yet they continue to provide valuable support services to children, university students and inservice teachers.

It is important to note that subjects were not selected randomly but drawn from schools which had existing teaching center agreements with the University of Minnesota. These teaching center schools, both inner-city and suburban, fairly accurately reflect the cross-section of educational philosophies and practices in the metro area. Table 1 provides some selected descriptive data on subjects who responded to various biographical information items.

Procedure

Questionnaires designed to yield Likert type data were used to collect subjects' perceptions of need for skill training. The data collection schedule was established to minimize disruption of typical classroom activities. Subjects were asked to respond either at regularly scheduled

meeting times or to complete the questionnaires at their leisure and return them by a specified date. Completion of the questionnaire took about 10-15 minutes. Responses to these questionnaires were organized in a series of preliminary reports on each individual center as well as a composite of needs across centers. The preliminary reports were intended to provide some immediate and easily interpretable feedback to centers and to serve as a basis for enabling supporting responses to teachers, student teachers, and other educational personnel.

When it was determined some needs for skill training existed, subjects responses were then intercorrelated and factor analyzied using SPSS with squared multiple correlations as estimates of communalities. Finally, factor scores were generated and each individual center was profiled on its own set of scores.

The questionnaire used was an adaptation of an instrument developed by Ingersoll (1975) to assess inservice needs. The modifications made for this study were relatively minor. It seemed that the Ingersoll instrument was predominately affectively oriented. This orientation excluded possible perceived needs for skill training in the traditional subject areas. In order to address this concern, five items on the original Ingersoll instrument were replaced by six items related to the following subject areas: math, science, social studies, reading, language arts, and children's literature. Internal consistency of the modified instrument was extremely high (Cronbach's alpha = .96).

Results and Discussion

The preliminary analyses indicated that teachers, student teachers, and other educational personnel thought they had needs for skill training

in a variety of areas. For example, 75% of the student teachers either agreed or strongly agreed they had needs for skill training for effective discipline techniques and 74% agreed or strongly agreed they had needs for training in diagnosing basic learning difficulties. Teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they had needs for selecting materials for individualized instruction (60%) and needs for training to involve pupils in self-evaluation (55%). Other personnel either agreed or strongly agreed that they needed skill training in identifying pupil attitudes that related to problems (69%) and stimulating growth of pupil attitudes and values (63%). All three groups stressed the importance of motivating pupils to learn by agreeing or strongly agreeing that they needed skill training in this area (teachers 67%, student teachers 73%, other personnel 72%). The factor analysis of needs revealed a number of concepts underlying these various perceptions.

The varimax rotated factor matrix yielded three identifiable factors accounting for 84% of the common variance. These factors were labeled: Factor 1, Individualizing-Stimulating Communication; Factor 2, Emphasizing Affect; Factor 3, Supervision-evaluation. Table 2 presents factor loadings, communalities and percentages of variance in perceived needs accounted for by each factor.

As evidenced by the factor loadings in Table 2, Factor 1 points to concerns for enhancing pupil expression/motivation, particualrly in the areas of reading, language arts and literature. It is interesting to note

that concerns for individualizing instruction loaded on the same factor. This might, in part, be explained by the frustrations of persons attempting to tailor instruction to fit individual pupils in these particular subject areas. Factor 2 clearly represents concerns for skill training in affective areas, i.e., providing reinforcement, developing self-evaluation strategies, accepting self and others, enhancing self-concept and worth as well as facilitating social interaction. Factor 3 represents what may be thought of as the concept of teacher as "supervisor-evaluator." This factor is defined by concerns for managing classroom affairs to maximize potential benefits, evaluating teaching effectiveness and supervising practicing teachers.

Since Factor 1 accounted for such a substantial portion of the common variance (70%), it would logically be the factor which would receive most attention when attempting to respond to center participants' perceived needs. In order to assess the relative importance of Factor 1 by center, factor scores were generated for all subjects and each center was profiled by computing means and standard deviations of its respective factor scores. These profiles appear in Table 3.

It is apparent from an examination of the standard deviations of the factor scores in Table 3 that the amount of variance within centers renders the process of profiling according to factor scores virtually useless. These differences within centers appear to be attributable to differences among the groups of preservice, inservice and other personnel (McNergney, 1976). When planning supporting responses by centers, the most appropriate course of action would appear to be a simple item-by-item

listing of the three groups of center participants' perceived needs. This would permit a degree of individualization of response which is not possible when factor scores are used.

To rely solely on a one shot survey of the perceptions of teaching center personnel in order to determine needs for skill training would be questionable. Some other information pertinent to instructional behavior, e.g., indications of pupil performance would undoubtedly add significantly to a needs assessment. This study indicates, however, that center personnel involved simultaneously in their own education, the education of peer professionals and the education of children believe they possess some needs for skill training. It also indicates that needs for skill training in the context of teaching centers can be reduced to a number of underlying concepts. These concepts could be used to lend direction to the activities of center support personnel. Being aware of patterns of needs across centers could be useful, particularly from the points of view of cooperating institutions of higher education, when determining how supporting resources are to be expended in order to increase the likelihood of maximum effectiveness. Knowing what people want could reduce hit-and-miss support efforts, thus enabling activities which are truly responsive to persons directly involved in the operation of cooperative teaching centers.

List of Items

I HAVE A NEED FOR SKILL TRAINING IN:

1. Diagnosing basic learning difficulties.
2. Constructing, using and interpreting tests for evaluating academic progress.
3. Identifying pupil disabilities that need referral or special remedial work.
4. Identifying pupil attitudes in order to better relate to problems.
5. Enhancing pupil expression through the use of language arts activities.
6. Involving pupils in self-evaluation.
7. Teacher-pupil verbal interaction.
8. Deciding what teaching technique is best for a particular intended outcome.
9. Selecting and specifying performance goals and objectives.
10. Planning teaching activities with other teachers or administrators.
11. Creating useful remedial materials.
12. Evaluating instruction/instructional design.
13. Motivating pupils to learn on their own.
14. Keeping abreast of innovative strategies for teaching social studies.
15. Selecting and developing materials and activities appropriate for individualized instruction.
16. Implementing and supervising individualized instruction.
17. Using questioning procedures that promote discussion.
18. Utilization of audio-visual equipment and other mechanical aids.
19. Gearing instruction to problem solving.
20. General presentation of information and directions.
21. Planning and utilizing science approaches which foster inquiry.
22. Providing for reinforcement.
23. Deciding on appropriate pupil grouping procedures for instruction.
24. Constructively using evaluation in helping pupil progress.
25. Managing classroom affairs in order to get maximum benefit from supervising, aids, tutors, etc.
26. Knowing where to refer pupil problems beyond what can be handled by their teacher
27. Useful methods of classroom discipline and when to use them.
28. Maintaining classroom control without appearing as an ogre to the pupils.
29. Communicating and interacting with parents.
30. Using methods and materials which stimulate pupil interest and growth in mathematics.
31. Counseling and conferring with pupils.
32. Involving others in the school system.
33. Developing a personal self-evaluation method.
34. Developing a broad acceptance of self.
35. Developing a capacity of accepting others' feelings.
36. Facilitating pupil self-concept and worth.
37. Facilitating pupil social interaction.
38. Stimulating pupil interest and involvement in children's literature.
39. Stimulating growth of pupil attitudes and values.
40. Instilling in the pupil the will to learn on his own initiative.
41. Facilitating pupil progress in reading.
42. Identifying the gifted and talented pupils.
43. Helping fellow colleagues evaluate their teaching effectiveness.
44. Supervising and evaluating University students who are student teaching or working on other school based experience projects.

Table 1

Selected Descriptive Data on Subjects From All Centers Combined

	N	% of Respondents
1. SEX		
Males	74	21.0
Females	288	79.0
2. AGE		
25 or less	109	30.1
26-35	136	37.6
36-45	74	20.4
46-55	28	7.7
56 plus	8	2.2
unknown	7	1.9
3. PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE		
2 years or less	122	33.7
3-5 years	51	14.1
6-10 years	103	28.5
11-20 years	54	14.9
21 years plus	22	6.1
Unknown	10	2.8
4. MAJOR AREA OF PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY		
student teaching	100	27.6
teaching	198	54.7
aide or paraprofessional	35	9.7
guidance, counseling or sch. psych.	3	.8
other professional (library, nurse, etc.)	17	4.7
unknown	9	2.5
5. HIGHEST ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION		
high school diploma	33	9.1
bachelor's degree	164	45.3
master's degree	54	14.9
specialist degree	6	1.7
doctorate	3	.8
unknown	102	28.2
6. GRADE LEVEL OF MAJOR PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY		
kindergarten	26	7.2
primary grades (1, 2 or 3)	117	32.3
intermediate grades (4, 5 or 6)	89	24.6
multi-age	65	18.0
unknown	65	18.0
7. ARE YOU PRESENTLY ENROLLED IN A DEGREE PROGRAM?		
yes	166	45.9
no	188	51.9
unknown	8	2.2
8. IF YOU ARE IN A DEGREE PROGRAM, THEN ARE YOU ENROLLED AT?		
U of M., Minneapolis	135	37.3
Another state supported institution of higher education	24	6.6
a private institution of higher educ	10	2.8
unknown	193	53.3

Table 2
Varimax Rotated Factor Matrix
of Perceived Needs

Needs	Factor I	Factor II	Factor III	h2
1	.16	.11	.07	.04
2	.16	.02	.33	.13
3	.15	.17	.09	.06
4	.18	.39	- .04	.19
5	(.52)	.09	.07	.28
6	.26	.21	.15	.13
7	.24	.41	.07	.23
8	.22	.12	.31	.16
9	.18	.16	.28	.14
10	.15	.20	.38	.21
11	.33	.03	.18	.14
12	.06	.15	.43	.21
13	(.50)	.27	.09	.33
14	.35	- .02	.42	.30
15	(.51)	.13	.23	.33
16	(.53)	.18	.25	.38
17	.43	.33	.22	.38
18	.15	.27	.21	.14
19	.39	.29	.35	.36
20	.30	.39	.18	.27
21	.32	.13	.39	.27
22	.30	(.50)	.12	.35
23	.24	.23	.37	.25
24	.28	.36	.31	.30
25	.33	.18	(.51)	.40
26	.13	.34	.22	.18
27	.24	.24	.14	.13
28	.20	.25	.16	.13
29	.08	.38	.37	.29
30	.41	.29	.27	.34
31	.33	.35	.30	.32
32	.03	.36	.43	.32
33	.16	(.53)	.35	.43
34	.14	(.71)	.19	.56
35	.17	(.79)	.13	.67
36	.29	(.63)	.10	.49
37	.36	(.48)	.14	.38
38	(.56)	.29	.14	.42
39	.46	.40	.15	.39
40	(.54)	.28	.12	.38
41	(.57)	.31	.08	.43
42	.38	.23	.30	.29
43	.03	.20	(.61)	.41
44	.21	.07	(.52)	.31

Variance explained: Factor 1 = 70%
Factor 2 = 8%
Factor 3 = 6%

Table 3

Selected Descriptive Statistics
on Factor Scores for Factor I by Teaching Centers

Center	$\bar{X}$	SD	Min.	Max.
A	.05	.85	-2.10	1.93
B	-.09	.81	-2.08	1.39
C	.20	.68	-1.02	1.30
D	.07	.85	-1.49	1.63
E	-.17	1.07	-2.84	1.67
F	.01	.76	-1.49	1.16
G	-.09	.86	-2.12	1.30
H	.00	.97	-2.44	2.60
I	-.06	.98	-2.17	2.23
J	-.26	.81	-1.56	1.80

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